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News Release



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PRIVATE STEWARDSHIP GRANTS TO AID IMPERILED SPECIES

Private landowners in Hawaii, Oregon, Washington and Idaho will soon receive more than \$2 million in grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for projects that help conserve endangered, threatened and other at-risk species.

Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton today announced the Pacific Region grants as part of a national announcement that \$9.4 million in grants to benefit imperiled species have been awarded to 113 landowners in 43 states.

President Bush originally proposed the creation of the Private Stewardship Grant program during a speech in Lake Tahoe, Nev., in June 2000. The grants announced today, the first awarded under the program, will benefit species ranging from the whooping crane in the state of Nebraska and the Delmarva fox squirrel on Maryland's Eastern Shore to the bald eagle in the state of Washington and the koloa or Hawaiian duck on the island of Kauai.

"Conservation, and especially the conservation of imperiled species, must be a partnership between the American people and their government," Secretary Norton said. "By making these grants, we are empowering citizens to restore habitat on their land and take other steps to protect and recover endangered, threatened and at-risk species."

Each grant must be matched by at least 10 percent of the total project cost either in non-Federal dollars or in-kind contributions.

"Judging from the number of truly innovative grant proposals we reviewed, landowners across the U.S. are eager to work with us to conserve at-risk species," said Service Director Steve Williams. "We anticipate this public/private partnership will result in significant conservation achievements for wildlife and wildlife habitat."

The Private Stewardship Grants Program provides Federal grants on a competitive basis to individuals and groups engaged in voluntary conservation efforts on private lands that benefit Federally listed endangered or threatened species, candidate species or other at-risk species. Under this program, private landowners as well as groups working with private landowners are able to submit proposals directly to the Service for funding to support these efforts. President Bush has requested funding of \$10 million for this program in 2004.

Grants awarded in the Pacific Region include:

HAWAII

Lanaihale Summit Fence Project, Increment II (Application by Castle & Cook Resorts, LLC) (\$245,000) - To protect and restore the native forest ecosystem of the Lana'ihale Cloud Forest on the island of Lana'i. This project is expected to benefit a high number of endemic species, including 28 endangered plants, 2 tree snails, together called the Lana'i tree snail, that are proposed for Federal protection, 1 bird and 38 arthropods. This restoration effort will include installation of an enclosure fence that will restrict feral ungulates (hoofed animals) from accessing the forest and allow restoration and natural regeneration of native plants to occur. Among other plans and complementary agreements, the project begins the implementation of 25-year biodiversity plans as described in a critical habitat memorandum of agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Castle & Cooke Resorts, LLC.

Keauhou Forest Restoration (Application by Hawaiian Silversword Foundation) (\$100,000) - This is a comprehensive restoration program for 3,000 acres (1,214 hectares) of forest and former ranch lands at Keauhou Ranch. The project area contains diverse native forest and provides habitat for three endangered forest bird species, including the endangered Hawaiian hawk, the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat, as well as, nine endangered plant species. The overall objectives of the project are to protect and manage a large contiguous area of the landscape, enhance the long-term survival and integrity of native plant and animal communities and the natural processes on which they depend, and promote recovery of endangered species. The priority on-the-ground management actions necessary to achieve these objectives are fencing, alien animal control, alien plant control, reforestation, and endangered plant reintroduction.

Waihe'e Coastal Dunes and Wetland Preserve Protection and Recovery Project (Application by Maui Coastal Land Trust) (\$107,080) - This project will initiate long-term (10-year plus) restoration activities on the coastal dunes and wetlands of the 250-acre Waihe'e Preserve, to restore and enhance habitat for numerous coastal species including the endangered Hawaiian Stilt, Hawaiian Coot, Hawaiian Duck and Hawaiian Gallinule, two endangered insects, and at least five endangered plants. The objective of this first phase will be removal of invasive exotic plants from selected wetland and upper dune areas, widening the open water drainage corridor, expansion of the mudflat areas adjacent to open water in the wetlands, predator control in the wetlands areas to protect nesting birds, removal of old structures within and adjacent to the wetlands boundaries, plot planting of native rare and endangered plant species on selected upper dune areas.

Auwahi Dryland Forest Restoration, Southwest Haleakala, Maui (Application by Ulupalakua

Ranch) (\$45,000) - To support the continued community-based restoration of selected diverse tracts of dryland forest at Auwahi, Ulupalakua Ranch, Maui. This ecosystem restoration effort will benefit the Endangered Blackburn's sphinx moth and eight Endangered plants, some of which are reduced to only a few specimens in the wild, as well as, populations of many other depleted plant and animal species. The project objectives include fencing to exclude domestic and feral ungulates, control of invasive non-native plant species, and strategic propagation and outplanting that match those of the recovery plans prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Endangered species considered in this project. Based on the recent progress in an integrated multi-agency effort, supported by community volunteers, the goal of diverse self-sustaining dryland forest containing resident endangered species appears increasingly achievable.

Conservation Management in Partnership on Private Lands, Lumahai Valley (Application by University of Hawaii) (\$155,100) - To initiate management activities in Lumaha'i Valley to address the three most pressing conservation problems, the critical threats posed by feral ungulates, invasive habitat modifying plant species, and further loss of endangered species habitat. Two listed seabirds, the Hawaiian petrel and Newell's shearwater, will benefit from this project. Ten endangered and rare plants are known to be on site and the area has been designated critical habitat for ten plants. All of these species will benefit from the project through protection and propagation. Activities have been separated into two projects for funding: Initiation of ungulate control, and protection and propagation of 20 species of rare plants.

Kauai Private Lands Program (Application by Ducks Unlimited) (\$145,858) - This project will restore approximately 40 acres of freshwater wetlands, 100 acres of brackish water wetlands and 115 acres of associated upland and riverine habitat on 2 private properties on the island of Kauai. Five Federally protected birds will benefit from this project; the Hawaiian duck, Hawaiian goose, Hawaiian coot, Hawaiian moorehen and Hawaiian stilt. The restoration efforts will include sculpting wetland basins to encourage natural plant growth, installing predator-proof fencing, noxious weed control, and a wetland and native plant restoration program.

Hawaii Forest, Wetland and Riparian Restoration Project, Umikoa Ranch (Application by Fujitory Hawaii, Inc. DBA Umikoa Ranch) (\$127,700) - The primary goal of this project is to enhance forest, wetland and riparian habitat and establish protected sites for recovery of endangered plant, bird and insect populations. The project is expected to benefit 14 endangered species (3 forest birds, the Hawaiian hawk, Hawaiian duck, Hawaiian goose, and 8 plants) and another 15 species that are candidates or species of concern. Management activities will include site preparation; collection, propagation, and out-planting of common and endangered plants, as well as non-native plant removal. The project also calls for creation of wetland habitat for rare plants as well as riparian restoration. The secondary goal is to establish management practices that can help restore and protect native ecosystems and that are attainable, feasible and which can be successfully replicated on other lands.

Ku'o'hia Laka Hawaiian Rainforest Restoration Project (\$64,800) - This project establishes a plant propagation program for common forest plants as well as endangered, candidate and rare plant species. The project will improve existing native habitat to insure forest health necessary to support existing

populations of endangered animals (I`o or Hawaiian hawk/*Buteo solitarius* and `Ope`ape`a or hoary bat/*Lasiurus cinereus semotus*).

Manana Valley Fire Rehabilitation (Application by Manana Valley Farm, LLC) (\$43,367) - By understanding natural post-fire regeneration pattern, controlling post-fire invasive weeds, enhancing natural native koa (*Acacia koa*) recruitment, and augmenting forest rehabilitation with koa outplantings, this project will create habitat for the natural succession and recovery of rare and endangered species. This project will also secure the regrowth of a vibrant mixed koa forest for future rare species outplanting and formulate a template from which to conduct similar restoration and/or fire rehabilitation projects in the future.

Koa Forest Restoration at 'Ulupalakua, Maui (Application by Ulupalakua Ranch) (\$54,000) - This project initiates the outplanting stage of restoration of a *koa* (*Acacia koa*) forest of Pu'umakua on Ulupalakua Ranch lands. A new watershed restoration partnership is being formed by landowners of western and southern slopes of Haleakala to facilitate restoration of *koa* watershed forests. This project will likely serve as a regional model project for the restoration of this important forest type. The goals of exclusion of ungulates, control of invasive plant species, and re-establishment of original native *koa* watershed forests follow the recovery plan priorities for the Endangered Blackburn=s sphinx moth and eight Endangered plant species. The listing of two Candidate species may be precluded by conservation actions such as those described here.

Wiliwili Forest restoration at Pu'u-o-kali (Application by University of Hawaii) (\$75,325) - After years of planning and preparation, a 236 acre parcel will be protected from access by deer using an 8-foot deer proof fence. The objectives of the next phase of this project are to conduct outplantings for eight rare plant species, five of which are Endangered. One of the Endangered plants that will benefit is the Hawaii State flower (*Hibiscus brackenridgei*), or ma'o hau hele, one of the rarest hibiscus in the world. The intent is to control selected invasive plant species throughout the enclosure area including the elimination of non-native trees from 80 acres, or about half of the open lava lands, that are included in the are to be fenced.

OREGON

Willamette Valley (Application by The Nature Conservancy of Oregon) (\$289,760) - This project will restore riparian, prairie, and oak woodland habitat and habitat conditions for a total of 21 separate populations of seven Federally listed species including Fender's blue butterfly, Oregon chub, Willamette Valley daisy, Bradshaw's lomatium; one candidate species (streaked horned lark); and five Federal species of concern including northwestern pond turtle, yellow-breasted chat, and white-tip aster. The project will provide additional benefits for eight at-risk species including western meadowlark (the State bird), and western gray squirrel. This project will build on existing at-risk species benefits at five ecologically important sites in the Willamette Valley. The project will also provide a foundation of restored habitat and restoration capacity on which to base coordinated species recovery efforts on targeted private lands throughout the Willamette Valley.

Upper Tualatin River Floodplain Restoration Project (Application by Ducks Unlimited) (\$152,565)

- The object of this effort will be to restore, enhance, and protect a native riparian forest corridor, wetlands and oak savanna in the Upper Tualatin River Watershed. Species that will benefit include Federally threatened winter-run steelhead and Nelson's sidalcea, as well as species of concern such as coastal cutthroat trout, northern red-legged frog, and northwestern pond turtle. The project's goal is to improve water quality in the Tualatin River for the benefit of steelhead and trout, wildlife and citizens of Washington County. This project will serve as a demonstration project for community education and as a catalyst for additional restoration efforts on private land in the Tualatin River Basin.

Thomas Creek Riparian Restoration Project (Application by Ducks Unlimited) (\$234,099) - The project plans to restore 3000 acres of palustrine emergent marsh and eight miles of riparian habitat along Thomas Creek. Thomas Creek flows through a 10,000 acre ranch and is the largest tributary flowing into Goose Lake in Lake County, Oregon. This restoration effort will benefit the endangered Modoc sucker as well as redband trout, which is a candidate species, as well as other State sensitive fishes including Goose Lake tui chub and pit sculpin.

WASHINGTON

Columbia River Estuary - Deep River Habitat Restoration Project (Application by Columbia Land Trust) (\$130,000) - To protect and restore approximately 143 acres of disconnected floodplain habitat to benefit four listed salmonid species, and to enhance habitat function for a variety of wildlife species including bald eagle, marbled murrelet and other priority species. Restoration activities will include side channel reconstruction, tidegate removal, dike breaching, partial road removal, invasive vegetation removal, planting, and monitoring.

South Puget Sound Prairie Restoration Project (Application by The Nature Conservancy of Washington) (\$85,702) - To restore high-quality prairie and oak woodland habitat suitable for the colonization or introduction of eight at-risk animal species including western bluebird, and Puget blue butterfly and to establish new populations of four at-risk plant species. The species benefitting from this project include the Federally threatened golden paintbrush, and four species recently petitioned for emergency listing including western gray squirrel, western pocket gopher, Mardon skipper, and Taylor's checkerspot. The project will restore degraded prairie habitat on a new conservation parcel with the short-term goal of enhancing native habitats sufficiently to introduce selected at-risk species.

Steamboat Marbled Murrelet Habitat Protection and Enhancement (Application by Rayonier Timberlands Operating Company) (\$59,250) - For the abandonment, with strict environmental controls, of 4,435 feet of road running through the middle of an old growth forest called Steamboat. This includes abandoning the main logging road, five spur roads and six logging landings covering a total of six acres. Seven culverts will be removed and erosion prevention structures will be constructed. A 30-foot wooden stringer bridge controlling vehicle access to Steamboat will also be removed, permanently blocking vehicle access to the abandoned road. These actions will ensure the protection high quality marbled murrelet nesting habitat.

Tarboo Watershed Early Action Fish Passage Project (Application by Northwest Watershed Institute) (\$143,510) - Project partners propose correction of five high priority fish passage barriers on private lands in the Tarboo watershed. The Tarboo Watershed is on the North Hood Canal region of Washington. Removal of these fish barriers will open up 5 miles of stream length for rearing and spawning of coho salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout.

Tennile Creek Watershed Volunteer Riparian Pilot Program (Application by Whatcom Conservation District) (\$116,632) - To support ongoing grassroots efforts of voluntary in-stream and riparian habitat restoration along reaches of Ten Mile, Four Mile, and Deer Creeks which are tributaries to the Nooksack River in Whatcom County, Washington. Restoration activities will restore critical spawning and rearing habitats for listed chinook, bull trout, and coho salmon.

Habitat Improvement, San Juan Valley Golden Paintbrush Site (\$4,400) - To provide increased habitat for golden paintbrush at the San Juan Valley golden paintbrush site by mowing approximately one acre currently dominated by snowberry and hawthorn. The project includes a complete census and mapping of the population in the year after mowing. The project contributes toward a priority 1 recovery task by maintaining the largest and most vigorous population on private land.

IDAHO

Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Habitat Restoration Project (Application by Friends of the Teton River, Inc.) (\$110,000) - The Yellowstone cutthroat trout habitat restoration project will improve habitat at five locations along the Teton River, Idaho. The state of Idaho has established the cutthroat trout as a Category A priority species on the list of species of special concern. Restoration work will increase overhanging vegetative cover and in-stream woody debris. In addition, 2,815 feet of stream bank will be fenced.